

1 that will welcome me, that will provide me with environments
2 that will challenge me. If I feel it's not going to be an
3 environment that's not going to challenge me, not just
4 academically, I'm not going to apply. I want an environment
5 that challenges me, and I continue to look for that here at
6 Oakland University. It has challenged me. Micah has
7 challenged me in many ways, and I would encourage our
8 university to continue that process of challenging our
9 students. Thank you.

10 MADAM FOREMAN: Thank you, Mr. Hanna. Has
11 Mr. Trorig arrived? Okay. We've asked our Vice President of
12 Housing to address the Board, Dr. Snyder.

13 DR. SNYDER: Thank you Trustee Long and members of
14 the Board for giving me the opportunity to provide a fuller
15 explanation of what went into my decision to not allow the
16 young people in the OPTIONS program to reside in university
17 residence halls. I think it will help if I give a brief
18 overview of the program first, and I want to apologize for
19 reading this and for the length of it, but I felt that I
20 wanted to cover all the bases.

21 For a number of years Oakland school -- Oakland
22 University School of Education Human Services worked with the
23 Rochester and Waterford school districts in helping youngsters
24 with significant cognitive disabilities move beyond high
25 school. That program, called Transitions, currently brings 13

1 high school students to Oakland on a regular basis to
2 participate in activities that promote personal independence
3 and social development. Our school of education extended the
4 experience of these high school students by creating a program
5 called Postsecondary OPTION Transitions, which is also now
6 known as OPTIONS, that started in the fall of 2007, in order
7 to open our doors to these students after their high school
8 years, to help them further develop the self reliance and
9 confidence necessary to move into an area of employment. I
10 believe that OPTIONS is the only program of its kind in the
11 state that works closely with the students and their families
12 in our college setting using a combination of skill-building
13 classes, university courses, social activities, and job-
14 related experiencing to further participants' social
15 development.

16 I feel I must clarify that although they spend
17 considerable time engaged in an array of campus programs and
18 services, and they do pay a program fee, the participants have
19 not qualified for admission to the university. Each semester
20 OPTIONS participants attend two O.U. classes along with a
21 special OPTIONS class. The intended outcome is not that they
22 master the academic subject matter, but rather that their
23 class involvement helps them realize personal improvement
24 goals and further stimulates them to want to learn more.

25 Oakland professors who teach OPTIONS members have been willing

1 to individualize course expectations so the students succeed
2 at their level of confidence, including giving them special
3 exams orally or customizing assignments to get the best effort
4 from each individual. Perhaps one of the best features of the
5 OPTIONS is the peer-buddy system where our Oakland students,
6 many of them who are here today, volunteer to spend time
7 assisting them during and after class with note taking and
8 study skills sessions.

9 Beyond class work, we also welcome these young
10 adults at any campus event and encourage them to join a club
11 they enjoy. We recently placed one OPTIONS participant in an
12 internship at our Lowry Child Center that lead to employment.
13 We encouraged them to become active members of the recreation
14 center, and Micah Fialka-Feldman in particular has served as
15 an assistant in our student activities center. All of the
16 OPTIONS students' scheduled activities bring them into close
17 contact with university students and faculty and begin to
18 expose them to the world of work.

19 Last Fall Micah decided that a more college-like
20 experience for him should involve living in our residence
21 halls, and subsequently we received contract requests from him
22 and others in the program. In weighing the feasibility of
23 Micah's request my staff and I met with Micah and his parents
24 on several occasions, spoke to faculty members who teach in
25 the program, and discussed his situation at length with the

1 director of Oakland's Disability Support Services, the
2 Director of University Housing, School of Education officials,
3 and people from other state universities. In everything I
4 heard it was never disputed that OPTIONS was designed as an
5 educational alternative for individuals who cannot meet
6 university admission requirements. Were they to qualify for
7 admissions the participants would receive every appropriate
8 accommodation available to our current population of 400
9 disabled students, along with full inclusion and on-campus
10 housing. Would families select OPTIONS for their children, we
11 must all understand that it does not come with an entitlement
12 to live on campus. Oakland students who choose to live in our
13 residence halls are afforded the opportunity to pursue their
14 academic work in a setting that provides considerable
15 independence, plus convenient access to the support systems
16 that help them earn a degree.

17 The university expects personal accountability from
18 its residential students in exchange for allowing them to live
19 free from excessive restrictions. As a condition of living
20 here we require our students to acknowledge that they are
21 responsible for knowing, understanding, and complying with all
22 university rules as written in our publications. I have been
23 told by professors and others that in the main OPTIONS
24 students neither read nor write, therefore, given the inherent
25 nature of the residential experience and the inability of the

1 OPTIONS participants to fully engage in the academic life of
2 the university, it was my professional judgment that the
3 independent living environment of the residence halls was not
4 suitable for the young people who are not here to pursue a
5 degree of any kind. Moreover, it was my opinion that their
6 presence in a group living environment imposed added oversight
7 responsibility on the staff, most of whom are students
8 themselves. My decision also took into account the reality
9 that most Oakland University students never leave on campus,
10 yet they have a highly satisfying and successful experience
11 that is not impeded by living across the street or across
12 town. In talking with Micah about his long bus travels, I
13 completely understand why he wishes to live closer. The
14 administration of our school of education has offered to work
15 with him and his family in finding housing that is closer to
16 campus and that gives him the independence that he seeks.

17 In closing I want to express my appreciation to
18 everyone we've heard from during the last month and today.
19 The breadth of support for Micah is truly impressive. And
20 I've come to know Micah very personally in the last year, and
21 I agree with Miss Snow that he is certainly a positive
22 influence on the community. His presence on campus everyday
23 teaches us a lot about setting goals and persevering to those
24 goals. I really do hope that he and other OPTIONS
25 participants continue to benefit personally and academically

1 from their welcomed involvement in the OPTIONS program. Thank
2 you very much.

3 MADAM FOREMAN: Are there any other comments from
4 the board? I'll take a motion to adjourn.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So moved.

6 MADAM FOREMAN: Okay. Do I have a second?

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second.

8 MADAM FOREMAN: Okay. We have a motion to adjourn
9 and a second. This meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

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